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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004364

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: CHARGE DISCUSSES IRAQ WITH SENIOR MFA OFFICIALS,
DELIVERS STRONG MESSAGE ON SYRIA

REF: A. ANKARA 4187

[B.](#) ANKARA 3844

[C.](#) ANKARA 4186

[D.](#) ANKARA 4260

Classified By: CDA Nancy McElroy for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: GOT Special Envoy for Iraq Koruturk told Charge July 25 that Turkey hopes the Sunni Arabs will return soon to constitutional negotiations. He rebutted Kurdish criticism of Turkish outreach efforts, expressed concern that the Kurds may be agitating for Turkish troops to leave northern Iraq, and reported that Shia and Sunni leaders in Talafar had reached an agreement to end sectarian violence. Koruturk expressed frustration over increased PKK activity in Turkey, but agreed that the issue must not divide Turkey and the U.S. and that Turkey would act to preserve and strengthen stability in Iraq. Charge delivered a strong warning on a possible visit by Syrian President Asad to Turkey. End summary.

[¶2.](#) (C) GOT Special Envoy for Iraq Osman Koruturk called in Charge July 25 to discuss Iraq and Syria; he was joined by his deputy, Ethem Tokdemir, and Deputy Director General for the Middle East Safak Gokturk. Koruturk began by thanking us for providing good meetings during his July 5-6 visit to Washington (ref a). Koruturk repeated the importance of Sunni participation in the constitutional process (ref b), and hoped that the Sunni representatives on the constitutional committee would soon return to the table. Koruturk reported that his Iraqi Sunni Arab contacts have told him that a full investigation of the assassination of the two Sunni committee members would reassure them; he added that some Sunnis believe the Kurds are behind the murders (over the Kirkuk issue).

Criticism of Turkish Outreach Efforts

[¶3.](#) (C) Koruturk sought to deflect apparent Kurdish criticism of the constitutional seminar the Turks held July 12-13. He said the Iraqi Kurdish press had accused the Turks of holding a secret meeting without KDP and PUK representatives to pressure the other communities in Iraq to hold firm on Kirkuk and the PKK issue. Koruturk asserted that the participants did not discuss Kirkuk and that the Iraqi co-organizer--Ghassan al-Atiyyah of the Iraqi Fund for Democracy and Development--had chosen the Iraqi participants with an eye toward reconciliation. (NOTE: The PUK representative to Turkey had complained about the Kurds' apparent exclusion from the seminar to PolMilloff. END NOTE.)

Kurds Pressing for Turkish Troops to Leave?

[¶4.](#) (C) Koruturk expressed concern that the Kurds are seeking to press Turkish military units in northern Iraq to leave. His information (Kurdish press articles calling for the Turkish forces to leave, a petition drive, and meetings between KDP leader Masoud Barzani's brother, Nihat, and PKK front parties) echoed what TGS had provided to us July 19 (ref c), but Koruturk was either unaware of or did not mention TGS's further claims to us that the PKK was planning to attack Turkish positions in Iraq.

PKK Frustrations

[¶5.](#) (C) Charge cited recent public statements by Turkish officials, including FonMin Gul and PM Erdogan, on the issue of "hot pursuit" of PKK terrorists over the border into Iraq, and noted that a press debate on this sensitive issue was exceptionally unhelpful. She emphasized that both sides must work together to educate the Turkish public on what the U.S. has done and is doing to fight the PKK, and that we should not fight out issues such as hot pursuit in the press. Koruturk responded that D/CHOD GEN Basbug had in fact attempted to cool down the rhetoric in Turkey by acknowledging that CF have orders to arrest PKK leaders in Iraq (refs c and d), but asked why USG spokesmen had denied this.

[¶6.](#) (C) DDG Gokturk noted that Iraqi officials seem to have

ceded control of the border to Kurdish authorities; these same authorities, he asserted, are themselves cooperating with the PKK. Koruturk added that the GOT is particularly frustrated by the knowledge that it is capable of taking military action against the PKK in northern Iraq, but is constrained by its respect for Iraqi sovereignty since the fall of Saddam and the presence of a legitimate government in Baghdad. Charge urged that the PKK issue not be allowed to divide us, and that Turkey not react by taking "rash steps." This is a delicate time for Iraq, and we do not need a "conflagration" involving Turkish troops in northern Iraq. Koruturk answered that he is working for precisely the same ends.

A Peace Deal in Talafar?

17. (C) Koruturk asserted that Sunni and Shia leaders in the northwest Ninewah city of Talafar had reached an agreement to cease sectarian violence and also not to support the insurgency there. He noted that a group of leaders from both sides had presented their plan to DPM Chalabi in Baghdad. Koruturk recalled that Turkey had been working to bring many of the same leaders to Ankara to meet FonMin Gul in an effort to stop the fighting, but "perhaps this will not be necessary now." He believed some Sunnis in Talafar were supporting the insurgents to gain their assistance against the Shia. Koruturk urged that any potential CF action in Talafar not turn into a "Fallujah-type" operation; this would inflame Turkish public opinion.

Syria: No Firm Answer on an Asad Visit

18. (C) Koruturk and Gokturk noted the recent visit of Syrian Deputy FonMin al-Muallim to Turkey, and provided a condensed readout of his meetings here (more in ref d). Koruturk rehearsed his argument that the U.S. should follow Turkey's policy of "persistent dialogue" with Syria with an eye toward achieving measurable results, such as a renewed U.S.-Iraq-Syria border agreement. Gokturk reported that it is not yet decided whether Syrian President Asad will visit Turkey.

19. (C) Charge warned that Syria is seeking to manipulate Turkey by exploiting high-level contacts such as Turkish President Sezer's April 13-14 visit to Damascus and the prospective Asad visit here. The regime uses Turkey to show cracks in the international consensus that Syria must stop interfering in Lebanon, must stop supporting Palestinian rejectionists and terrorists, and must stop providing aid and comfort to terrorists who operate in Iraq. It is not only the administration that is concerned about Ankara's course here: Many friends of Turkey in Congress, in various lobbies, in the press, and in other countries are dismayed by the prospect of Asad's visit to Turkey. Charge added that the U.S. has so far sought to deal with this matter privately and not in the press. Nor did the U.S. object when the Syrian Interior Minister visited Istanbul to attend the recent Iraq neighbors' meeting. But, she argued, the Syrians will use high-level, bilateral ties with Turkey as a wedge against the will of the international community.

Comment: Why Are We Here?

10. (C) Koruturk had few specifics on his mind other than fairly weak press reports about Kurdish pressure to get Turkish troops out of Iraq, urging us to keep the Sunni Arabs involved in the constitutional process, and points we've heard repeatedly on Syria. We are a bit mystified as to why he called this meeting. Charge was nonetheless able to use the opportunity to directly go after Turkey's threadbare Syria policy. End comment.

11. (U) Iraq REOs minimize considered.
MCEDOWNEY